

South Street Seaport Museum,
273 Water Street
(The Rose House)
New York City
New York County
New York

HABS No. NY-5686

145-10
NY,
31-NE40,
144-

PHOTOGRAPH

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HABS
NY,
31-NY-40,
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

SOUTH STREET SEAPORT MUSEUM,
273 WATER STREET
(The Rose House)

HABS No. NY-5686

Location: 273 Water Street,
Between Peck Slip and Dover Street,
New York, New York County, New York.

Present Owner: City of New York.

Present Occupant: Vacant.

Significance: Built in 1773 for Captain Joseph Rose, 273 Water Street is the oldest dwelling and shop and the third oldest building surviving in Manhattan. Originally built as a two-and-a-half story brick fronted frame structure with a shared cartway that ran to the East River, the building was raised to four stories in 1904 after a fire. Another fire in 1976 seriously damaged the building.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1773: On March 15, 1773 Captain Joseph Rose advertised in the Gazette & Weekly Mercury that he had space for rent in his new house which he lived in. On August 26, 1773 a similar advertisement appeared in the same newspaper. Originally designated 135 Water Street, the building became 273 Water Street, sometime between 1791 and 1794. (Research by Ellen Rosebrock.)
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The building is standing on Block 107-W, Lot 48. The land was originally part of a water lot granted to Cornelius Van Horne on March 6, 1752. Information for the following chain of title comes from the files of New York City Conveyance Records, Surrogate's Court.

Recorded 11, 1772
(Indenture made Oct. 18, 1771)

Liber 40; p. 76
Garrit Van Horne, Exrs. of
(son of Cornelius Van Horne)
to
Joseph Rose, city mariner
(1/2 part of Water Lot #5)
Rose Paid L460.

Recorded March 11, 1835
(Indenture made
May 25, 1807)

Liber 371; p. 211 & p. 214.
Joseph Rose (Trustee of)
to
Elisha W. King
(\$5,000)

March 25, 1850

Liber 536; p. 582
Francis N. Bangs
(descendent of King)
to
Hiram Ketchum

December 18, 1861

Liber 850; p. 151
Augustine N. and Frances Lawrence
to
Henry C. Simms

July 23, 1862

Liber 856; p. 496
Henry C. and Maria O. Simms
to Augustine N. Lawrence

May 29, 1873

Liber 1260; p. 38; p. 44
Helen F. Watson
(formerly) Shelton
King (trustee)
to
William H. Boole

June 25, 1877

Liber 1424; p. 61
William H. and Eunice C. Boole
to Helen F. Watson

May 4, 1882

Liber 664; p. 119
Henry W. and Henrietta E. Shelton
to
Helen King Luquer

March 6, 1883

Liber 1713; p. 66
Helen F. Watson (Exr. of)
to
Rose Smith

March 7, 1883

Liber 1707; p. 275
Helen King Watson
to
Rose Smith

March 9, 1883

Liber 1699; p. 460
Rose Smith
to
Veronica Smyth

June 21, 1883

Liber 1726; p. 351
A. Veronica Smuth
to
Ann Callaghan

December 4, 1883

Liber 1767; p. 236
Ann Callaghan
to
Jefferson M. Levy

December 9, 1883

Liber 2104; p. 100
Jefferson M. Levy
to
William S. Kane

June 5, 1888

Liber 2146; p. 124
William S. and Gertrude Kane
to
Jefferson M. Levy

March 27, 1889

Liber 2213; p. 20
Jefferson M. Levy
to
John Jay Costello

September 8, 1932

Liber 3849; p. 24
Henrietta Zibell
to
Muriel Zibell

September 8, 1932

Liber 3849; p. 26
Henrietta Zibell
to
Anita J. Hiller

June 9, 1937

Liber 3859; p. 214
Elsie A. Schlegel
to
Henrietta Zibell

June 25, 1943

Liber 4214, p. 65
Marice J. Kerbel (Referee)
Henrietta Zibell (Indiv.)
& as Extrix of
Julius A. Zibell, et al, Defts.
to
Central Savings Bank
in the City of New York

February 14, 1944

Liber 4263; p. 382
Central Savings Bank
in the City of New York
to
William Engles

March 12, 1947

Liber 4263; p. 382
William Engels
to
Jacob Freidus
Samuel E. Aaron

January 7, 1949

Liber 4605; p. 185
Jacob Friedus
Samuel E. Aaron
to
Vincent J. Vaccaro

April 5, 1950

Liber 4667; p. 468
William J. Vaccaro
to
William)
Lawrence) Timmins
Richard)

April 30, 1976

Liber 367; p. 1831
Finance Administration
of City of New York
to
City of New York
(Deed)

4. Original plans and construction: When first built in 1773, Joseph Rose's shop and house was only two stories tall with a spacious garret room under its steep-pitched roof. Original elements include brownstone trim in the beltcourses (horizontal bands marking upper floor levels) and splayed window lintels. The sidewalls were built of wood. (Rosebrock, Counting-house Days in South Street, p. 10-11.) The first floor retains an original doorway on the left hand side and a tiny, oddly shaped window with the broad, blank wall above on the right side suggests the location of the little alley. (Rosebrock, Walking Around in South Street.)

The alley or cartway was shared by Joseph Rose's property and William Laight's, his next door neighbor. A common yard and common cartway was mentioned in a 1778 survey by Gerard Bancker, of 136 Water Street (William Laight's building). Rose's house and shop was described as a frame building with brick front and back building, 34 feet deep. (Manuscript Division-New York Public Library.)

A September 23, 1780 Bancker Survey gives the dimensions of the two properties. While both buildings were 34 feet wide, Captain Rose's front was 20.7 feet while Laight's was 20.5 feet. Half of the 7.10 foot gangway belonged to both of them. The survey indicates that Mr. Laight was building on the length of his property. (Notebooks of Evert Bancker, Vol. I & Folder 121, Manuscript Division, New York Public Library.)

5. Alterations and additions: On May 1, 1797 Joseph Rose and William Laight were directed by the Common Council to raise and pave their cart passage by the fifteenth of June under the penalty of L40. Along with the half part of the common cartway, Rose owned "the moiety or half part of the shop or tenement erected in the arch between the house" of Edward Van Horne and Captain Rose. (Conveyance between the heirs of Captain Joseph Rose and Elisha W. King, May 25, 1807, Recorded March 11, 1837).

Until 1875, the insurance maps by William Perris show 273 Water Street as an all frame building. Since it is known that the building had a brick front as early as 1778 and most probably when first built, it seems that Perris just did not indicate a combination of materials. The back building in the common cartway was generally designated 271½ or another 273.

An 1857 Perris map shows that the Rose house had a small frame addition at back and that the shop in the cartway was of frame also. In 1867 the addition is no longer there but the one-story shop appears to be brick, with slate or metal roof and coped walls. Today an extension takes up the entire lot.

The first and only recorded alteration occurred after a fire in 1904 when the front and rear walls were raised to the height of the ridge of the old peaked roof. Since two stories were added and the building is now four stories, the third story must have been taken down before the addition was made.

Another fire in March 1976 severely damaged the Rose house. Today it stands without a roof and most of its interior.

- B. Historical context: Very little is known about Joseph Rose before he built the house and shop on Water Street in 1773. He was born in 1735 and married Barbary Egburson (later known as Barbara Egbertson) in 1766. He was one of the founders of the Marine Society in 1769 and one of the first members of the Masonic Society of the City of New York in 1770. Joseph Rose owned a brig called the Industry which he used in the Atlantic and Carribean trade and in September 1770 he entered the shipping news columns as "Captain Rose."

An advertisement dated May 6, 1786 in a 19th century reprint of a 1786 directory states: "135 Water Street to be let, a three-story house and back house with three fireplace rooms. Dock back of house. Inquire at said house of Joseph Rose." The 1785 directory lists Joseph Rose as a distiller at 135 Water Street.

The earliest available tax assessment of 1789 shows that the building was assessed to Joseph Rose as a house and shop, occupied by Abraham Walton. Abraham Walton remained in the Rose house and shop until 1790 when he moved to 269 Water Street, leaving the Rose house vacant. Walton was a vestryman of Trinity Church and a delegate to the First Provincial Congress in 1775. At the end of the Revolution he had become a merchant.

From 1796 to 1807 Captain Rose's son, Isaac, ran an apothecary shop at 273 Water Street.

In 1807, when Captain Rose died, lawyer Elisha W. King bought the property to rent. King was quite active in New York politics; throughout the years he was elected as an inspector, a charter officer, assistant alderman, alderman, New York State Assemblyman, and finally in 1827 he was a candidate for Mayor but received only one vote.

While Elisha King owned the property, 273 Water Street had many different occupants. From 1808 to 1810 Erastus Fuller, watchmaker, occupied the shop. In 1811 a mariner named John Numlin lived there. Then in 1812, Numlin ran a boarding house in the upper stories while William Clark, shoemaker, and John Ridell (Riddle), baker, had their shops at 273 Water Street.

The longest lasting tenant was grocer William Pearsall who paid taxes on the property from 1845 until 1870. Before that time he had served New York City as a grain measurer and as a fireman.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

See accompanying HABS photograph of the building for a visual observation.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

New York City Conveyance Records, Surrogate's Court.

New York City Tax Records, Municipal Archives, 23 Park Row.
1808-1965; earlier years from NYC Landmarks Preservation
and Ellen Rosebrock.

New York City Department of Buildings, Municipal Building,
Alteration Index Book application #1692 (1904).

Roberts, Lee and Steinke, Nancy; "Inventory of Structures in the
Brooklyn Bridge S.E. Urban Renewal Area." New York: Landmarks
Preservation Commission, May 1968, p. 21.

Insurance Maps of the City of New York, 1852-1875, New York
Historical Society.

Manuscript Division of the New York Public Library: (a) 1778 Gerard
Bancker Survey of Edward Laight's property; (b) Notebooks of Evert
Bancker, Vol. i 1780 Bancker Survey, September 23, 1780 of Edward
Laight's building, and Folder 121, Plan of Laight building.

2. Secondary and published sources:

New York City Directories, New York Historical Society,
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Minutes of the Common Council, 1874-1831. New York: The City
of New York, 1917, Vol. 2, p. 343 (Joseph Rose);
Vol. 4, p. 143; Vol. 7, p. 612; Vol. 8, p. 86; p. 211;
Vol 9, p. 200; p. 636; Vol. 16; p. 654.
(Elisha W. King);
Vol. 3, p. 127, p. 196, p. 670; Vol. 4, p. 592,
Vol. 9, p. 7, p. 623; Vol. II, p. 323
(William Pearsall).

Rosebrock, Ellen Fletcher. Counting-house Days in South Street.
New York: South Street Seaport Museum, 1975, p. 10-12.

Rosebrock. Farewell to Old England. New York: South Street Seaport
Museum. 1976, p. 63.

Rosebrock. Walking Around in South Street. New York: South Street
Seaport Museum, 1974, p. 31-34.

Scoville, Joseph A. alias Barrett, Walter. The Old Merchants of
New York. New York: Carleton, Pubs., 1862, Vol. III, p. 61
(Joseph Rose).

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PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The South Street Seaport project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, with the co-operation of the South Street Seaport Museum, Inc. Recording was carried out during the Summer of 1976 by Frederick W. Wiedenmann (HABS Washington, D.C. office), project supervisor; Lori Zabar (Columbia University), project historian; Robert Lee Wiltse (Louisiana State University), architect; and student architects: Barry Lee Gill (North Dakota State University), Joe E. Price (Texas Tech University), and John R. Temmink (University of Virginia). Susan McCown, a HABS staff historian in the Washington, D.C. office, edited the written data in 1983, for transmittal to the Library of Congress. Walter Smalling, Jr. of the National Park Service took the photographs of the South Street Seaport structures.